

# NEWS RELEASE



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Annenberg Foundation, City of Santa Monica, State Parks

## **State Parks Applauds Public/Private Partnership To Restore Historic Marion Davies Estate for Public Use**

SACRAMENTO – California State Parks Director Ruth Coleman today announced a partnership between the City of Santa Monica, California State Parks and the Annenberg Foundation to restore the historic Marion Davies Estate, located on Santa Monica State Beach, for public use. The property was first developed by William Randolph Hearst in the late 1920s as a beachfront estate for actress Marion Davies. The Annenberg Foundation will provide a grant of \$21 million to restore the site for public use.

“I wish to commend the Annenberg Foundation and the City of Santa Monica for their dedication to finding a way to preserve this historic estate,” said Ruth Coleman, Director of California State Parks. “Through this unique public-private partnership, a significant Santa Monica landmark and part of our California heritage will once again be open for the enjoyment of residents and visitors.

I especially want to acknowledge the generosity of Wallis Annenberg for her very important support and contribution in helping to restore and preserve this property that is of such a major historical significance,” said Director Coleman.

This extraordinary beachfront five-acre site lies north of the Santa Monica Pier at 415 Pacific Coast Highway in Santa Monica and is recognized as an important historical and recreational asset to the city. City officials said the site is one of the most significant beachfront properties where the history of Santa Monica Bay can still be observed and experienced.

“This is an especially exciting project because this property will offer residents and families extraordinary access to a lovely stretch of beachfront property and will contribute to the quality of life in the area by providing a wide range of recreational opportunities,” said Wallis Annenberg, Vice President of the Annenberg Foundation. “This project will also help restore and preserve a spot that has a unique place in California history.” Wallis Annenberg has recently made other significant gifts in the greater Los Angeles region to support historic preservation for community use.

At the time of its construction, this stretch of beachfront property was known as the “Gold Coast” because of the numerous opulent residences found there and the lavish ways of life of

their owners and their friends. The three-story main house, three guest houses, two swimming pools and tennis courts made it the grandest enclave in the area.

The property was sold in the 1940s to a private party and converted to a hotel and beach club. The state purchased the property in 1960 and under an agreement with the state, the City of Santa Monica leased it to the Sand and Sea Beach Club. The site has been closed to the public since its fragile remains were damaged in the 1994 Northridge earthquake, and all structures except the beach café were “red-tagged,” or designated as unsafe to occupy.

Designed by noted California architect Julia Morgan, the North House (the original guest house) was designated a city landmark in 1980, and the swimming pool was designated as an “item of special interest” by the city’s Landmark Commission. The property is owned by California State Parks and is operated by the City of Santa Monica as part of the operating agreement for Santa Monica State Beach.

Marion Davies was a motion picture star in the teens, 1920s and 1930s. Her career spanned some 45 feature films with co-stars such as Gary Cooper, Clark Gable, Leslie Howard, Dick Powell and Robert Montgomery. She was one of the few silent stars to survive the transition from the silent era to talkies.

Founded in 1989 by the late publisher, diplomat and philanthropist, Walter H. Annenberg, the Annenberg Foundation exists to advance the public well-being through improved communication. As the principal means of achieving its goal, the Foundation encourages the development of more effective ways to share ideas and knowledge.

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